

## IV.—TUKE: INSANITY AND ITS PREVENTION.

INSANITY IN ANCIENT AND MODERN LIFE, WITH CHAPTERS ON ITS PREVENTION. By Daniel Hack Tuke, M. D. London: MacMillan & Co. 1878. 226 pages.

This very neat and readable volume is a popular rather than strictly a medical work, and part, at least, of its contents has appeared previously as articles in an English literary magazine. To the medical man, and to the alienist more especially, its main point of interest is to be found in the second of the three parts into which it is divided: that on "Insanity in Relation to Modern Life." The first section, on the prevalence of the causes of insanity in ancient times has also some interest to the physician, apart from its value as a discussion of a merely medico-historical subject, since it involves a comparison between the past and the present periods in regard to the questions of the etiology of insanity, and a general review of what the author considers the chief causes of insanity in all periods. The third division of the work, on self prevention, or, as the author calls it, anti-prophylaxis of insanity, is addressed more especially to the laity; the facts and precepts it contains are, or should be, known to the physician already. There are some points here also, however, that will claim our attention in this notice.

The causes of insanity which Dr. Tuke considers as the principal, comprehending more or less all minor ones, are stated in the first chapter, broadly, as follows: (1) Intoxication of all kinds, including under this head also all the hereditary effects of intoxication; (2) Mal-nutrition and poverty; (3) Causes chiefly moral and emotional, such as excitement, disappointment, etc.; and (4) and last, intellectual strain, which for the most part acts indirectly, and that on only a small portion of the population. According to this very general classification, the author reviews the probable prevalence of the causes of insanity in pre-historic and ancient times, in four interesting chapters, which, however, we can, for the most part, only slightly notice. The speculation, for it is largely only speculation, in regard to the prevalence of insanity in pre-historic times, brings up one collateral point in regard to which some remarks seem to be called for. As the pre-historic man was, in all probability, very similar to the existing savages in many parts of the world, the condition of these latter, as regards mental disease, may be taken as a fair index of his condition in this respect, and this method of estimating his liability is adopted by Dr. Tuke, who assumes, we think, incorrectly, that the modern savage is less liable, or as we understand him, more resistant to the influences producing insanity than his civilized contemporary. He says that civilization favors insanity, that an increased liability is "the penalty which

superior organisms have to pay for their greater sensitiveness and susceptibility." It would be more correct, it appears to us, to say that cases of insanity are more numerous among civilized people on account of the greater mental strain which civilization requires, the ability to sustain this strain, though in itself considerable, not always keeping pace with its increase. And even this may not be always correct; the statistics of insanity among savages are wanting, and we are inclined to think that mental disease is perhaps much more frequent among them than is generally supposed. Then we are of the opinion that the excitements of civilized life would tell far more severely upon the barbarian than upon those who habitually undergo them. And it seems to us also that in throwing out a certain class of moral and emotional influences causative of insanity, as of little or no effect among savages, he writes too positively—causes that we have evidence to believe are effective in producing mental derangement even among the lower animals ought not to be so summarily excluded. When parrots and dogs sometimes die from disappointed affection it appears almost unwarrantable to assume that such events may not happen even in the lowest condition of humanity. Indeed, with the exception of such as depend upon certain social conditions peculiar to civilization, and certain kinds of intellectual overstrain, the causes of insanity, we hold, are the same in savage as in civilized people. That they are less prevalent in the simple, and on the whole monotonous routine of the savage is true enough. The point we wish to make is that his mental health is as much or more likely to be disturbed by these causes when they occur as is that of his civilized brother. As to the frequency of insanity among uncivilized peoples, it is very difficult to obtain correct statistics, and very easy to make false estimates. Only the more pronounced forms of mental aberration would generally be recognized; the mild chronic maniac might very probably be amongst them, at least in many cases, a shaman or medicine man, and if his delusions took the direction of exaltation they would be very likely to be accepted by all or many of his tribal associates. If the insanity was of the acute and depressing kind, or if it seriously disabled him in the constant struggle for existence, he would very quickly be disposed of; there would be no Christian sentiment or charitable institution to keep him a burden on his fellows. We make these remarks, because, from personal knowledge of some savage or barbarian tribes, we have been led to think that mild chronic cases of insanity are not so rare among them as has been supposed to be the case.

According to the grade of civilization would naturally be the frequency of many of the causes of insanity and the mental habituation, or rather endurance, of them. Therefore, in ancient, though historic, periods we should look for just so much difference from the present in this respect, as might be expected from the different conditions of mental and social culture and development of the times. These are discussed quite fully in

the following chapters of the first part of the book. We need not dwell on them here, but will pass at once to the second part, where the subject of insanity in modern times is taken up.

The fact shown here, by a careful analysis of statistics in the first chapter of this section, that the great majority of the insane in Great Britain are of the uneducated class, indicates, to our mind, very plainly that it is the surroundings, and not any special mentally weakening influence of civilization that is the cause of the difference in the prevalence of insanity in barbarous and in Christian lands. The class that furnishes the greater number of insane is just the one that has least partaken of the advance in civilization, and whose mental condition is more nearly in the condition of that of the savage. Some of the facts and statistics of the causes of insanity here given would furnish good arguments for temperance reformers, all the more valuable as coming from so high an authority as Dr. Tuke.

The chapter on insanity in the higher classes dwells mainly on the evil effects of mental strain and overwork, touching only briefly on other causes, idleness and mental stagnation, moral and emotional disturbances, and religious excitement. As regards the latter, the author thinks that while, as a cause of mental disease, it has been overrated by some, others have unduly ignored it. It is a real cause, he says, and he lays great stress on the responsibility of those who through distorted statements of religion arouse the morbid tendency into active insanity. The guilt, whatever there is of it in these cases, of course depends upon the motive, but we are inclined to think, in spite of Dr. Tuke's apparent judgement, that the real danger is much more easily exaggerated than minified in these cases, and in our own limited observation the cases of insanity that might most readily be attributed to those causes have usually had a very different origin.

The last chapter in this section is a short one, but is valuable as affording a very careful and judicious discussion of statistics with special reference to the increase of insanity in modern times. His conclusion is that, taking the statistics of Great Britain, there has been in that country a great increase in the amount of recognized insanity, but that this can in great part be explained by the attention of the government and public having been directed to the care of the insane, to the decreased rate of mortality and the more accurate recognition of the condition. He is inclined, however, to admit that there may be an actual as well as an apparent increase. It is highly probable that his method of estimating the increase will be applicable also to the United States, but it cannot be followed with such exactitude here as in Great Britain, on account of the lack of accurate statistics for all the different States.

The third part, as we have already stated, is for the guidance of the non-professional reader, and does not contain much that the medical man ought not to know. Dr. Tuke's opinions on

some subjects, however, are worth mentioning. Thus, he speaks very decidedly, here as elsewhere, of the effects of alcoholics, and especially condemns an American physician, Dr. A. B. Arnold, of Baltimore, for saying, at the International Medical Congress, in Philadelphia, that "medical men allow themselves to be governed by the hue and cry of professional temperance orators, for it could not be proved that alcohol exerts much influence on the production of nervous diseases," a statement, the utterance of which is, we think, very properly characterized as an act of hardihood. We cannot, however, altogether agree with him when he takes American institutions especially to task as favoring the development of insanity, even though he quotes American authors as his authorities. We see no good reason for believing that there is any deterioration of the Caucasian race on this continent; according to our observation, though there are enough detrimental influences at work here, they are fully counterbalanced by those abroad. It is not merely patriotism that leads us to make this exception to what appears to be the author's drift, but our desire to see the real case fairly stated.

In conclusion, we can cordially recommend the volume to both the medical man and the public as an able and readable discussion of a very important subject.

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